



# COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

David Price (D-NC), Chairman, Subcommittee on Homeland Security

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## OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAVID PRICE

### *Update on the Southwest Border: The Challenges that DHS Continues to Face April 14, 2010 / 10:00 am*

Our Southwestern border region possesses a rich history, a shared culture interwoven over the centuries, and lands of unsurpassed natural beauty. It is not a faraway alien place, but an inextricable part of our homeland, with millions of hardworking families, and activities vital to a diverse economy. Cross-border trade is an important part of the picture: Eighty percent of Mexico's exports and half of its imports are with the United States; ten percent of our country's overall trade is with Mexico.

However, these trade statistics exclude illicit drugs. Over 90 percent of the cocaine entering our country is estimated to pass through Mexico, which is also our country's largest supplier of marijuana and methamphetamines. The U.S. appetite for drugs has nurtured powerful and corrupting cartels with tens of billions of dollars in criminal proceeds. These international criminal organizations routinely violate our borders to traffic drugs, weapons, and money; and to smuggle undocumented aliens. But it is the violence of these cartels, and the fear and disruption they sow, that now dominate the news.

Over 18,000 people, including 79 Americans, have died in Mexico since President Calderon confronted the cartels. The brutality, wanton disregard for bystanders including women and children, and apparent impunity with which cartels have operated is appalling. The question we raised in prior hearings and will explore today is whether and to what degree we are making progress against the cartels, making our borders harder to exploit, and reducing the risk that violence will spread.

I believe there is not much point in debating to what extent cartel violence has "spilled over" into the US. Our close relationship with Mexico means we cannot ignore the violence there, regardless of whether it physically crosses the line. The deaths in March of three persons in Ciudad Juarez associated with the U.S.

consulate; intensified assaults against Border Patrol agents, including the murder of two; kidnapping and murders of U.S. residents in Texas; and the recent homicide of an Arizona rancher all remind us of the threats of narco-violence. The truth is the cartels are engaged in criminal activity every day in cities and communities on both sides of the border, and not just along the border. We need to focus on meaningful ways to deal with cartels and their violence, on the border and beyond.

This hearing falls on the first anniversary of the Administration's announcement of its Southwest Border Initiative. Secretary Napolitano noted during her recent visit to Mexico that CBP and ICE's enhanced efforts have resulted in record seizures of drugs, firearms, and smuggled illicit cash. She also cited unprecedented cooperation with Mexico on information sharing, joint training, cross border communications, and trade. Today, we want your assessment of how successful DHS efforts are or will become, and we'll pose questions such as:

- How would you grade efforts to prosecute drug and trafficking cases in Mexico? Given that Mexico has its own immigration issues, will our cooperation help improve U.S. security against attempts by non-Mexicans to enter the U.S. through Mexico?
- Does the fiscal year 2011 budget enable CBP and ICE to sustain a long-term effort to counter the cartels?
- How effective are joint efforts with federal, State and local agencies, including backing them up when seriously outmanned or outgunned?

We also want to understand how investments made to date are complicating life for the cartels. These include the Secure Border Initiative, Border Enforcement Security Taskforces, deployment of air and marine assets, tunnel detection, and establishment of forward operating locations or checkpoints.

We welcome Commissioner Alan Bersin of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and Assistant Secretary John Morton, Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, to bring us up to date on the status of this initiative, in light of expanded staffing, equipment and other resources that Congress has provided to enable your agencies to work with federal, State and local partners, as well as with the Government of Mexico to overcome the cartels. Assistant Secretary Morton appeared here last November on this topic, but this is Commissioner Bersin's first time before this Subcommittee. Commissioner, I expect your freshman year at

DHS, along with your unique law enforcement and personal experience, has given you a realistic perspective on what can be accomplished on the border.

We will insert your complete statements in the hearing record, so please summarize your statements in a 5 minute presentation. We will begin with Commissioner Bersin, followed by Assistant Secretary Morton.

Let me turn now to the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Rogers, for his comments.

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